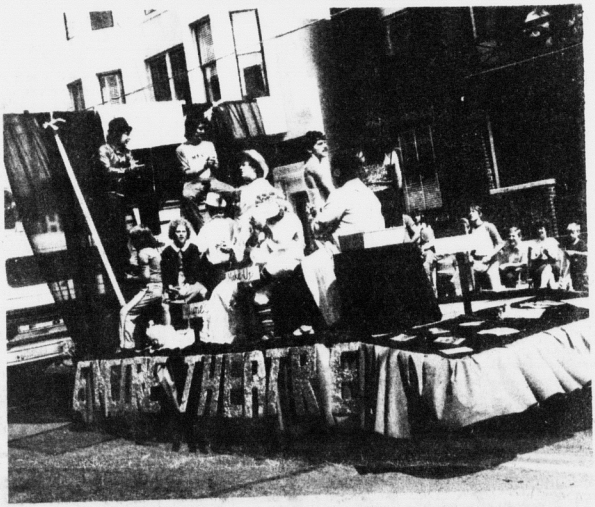

PIONEER DAYS FLOATS like this one, sponsored by the Encore Theatre, are enjoyed by thousands of onlookers. (NEWS file photo)

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Parade committee already accepting float entries

Brass bands, firetrucks, twirlers, antique cars and all sorts of marching units make most any parade enjoyable for spectators who line the sidewalks to watch. But frequently, the showstoppers in many parades are the floats, beautifully decorated and imaginatively designed. Every August since 1979, the city's Annual Pioneer Days Parade has been a hit with city residents as well as with those living in the greater Carbondale and Scranton areas. And if the 1983 parade committee gets its wish, this year's parade will be bigger and better than ever.

As a first step to that end, the committee is presently sending invitations to all area businesses, banks, churches, plants, factories, non-profit organizations and others, to participate in the 5th annual parade by entering floats. Trophies will be awarded for floats in various categories. Last year, about 22 floats were entered in the Pioneer Days Parade, and hopefully even more will be entered this year, says Robert Maguire, parade committeea chairman.

"Making a float isn't as hard as people might think," Maguire commented. He explained that a float basically consists of a wooden framework over which chicken wire is attached and shaped to the form the float will take when covered with decorations. Many float makers use colored bathroom or facial tissue to fill the holes in the wire so tight blankets of color can be achieved, Maguire mentioned.

Although many floats are constructed on flat-bed trucks, and since these floats are larger, they can accommodate large displays and quite a few people riding upon them. But Maguire pointed out that an attractive float can be constructed over a passenger car or pick-up truck. The concept of building a framework is the same for floats on these smaller vehicles, except that floats will be proportionally smaller.

After building a float for a car, it can be lifted up by several persons and placed over the vehicle. To support the float framework and protect the car from scratches, tires should be placed on the car's hood and truck. The car can first be covered with blankets or sheets for added protection to its finish.

Pioneer Days floats can be as long as the maker likes, but they can be no more than 18 feet high, due to street wiring. Also, they must not be so wide that vehicles can not pass by them in case of emergency. Blueprints, diagrams and any needed advice in making a float can be obtained from the parade committee, which includes, in addition to Maguire, Paul Daniels, Fire Chief William Burrell, Jerry Palko and George Wallis.

Aside from giving people a chance to get creative, floats can represent a business or group itself, or express a theme or idea. Parties interested in entering a float in the parade are asked to contact Maguire by February 20. He noted that the committee has already had numerous entries, many of which are from groups that will be entering a float for the first time.